

6.5. Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Recommendation:

THAT the Burlington Public Library Board approve BPL's Multi-year Accessibility Plan 2022-2025 (MYAP) in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), S.O. 2005, c. 11, O. Reg 429/7: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and O. Reg. 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards (IASR).

Purpose

In compliance with the IASR, O. Reg. 191/11, s. 4. (1), public sector organizations must “establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan, which outlines the organization’s strategy to prevent and remove barriers and meet its requirements under this Regulation” and “review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years.”

Background

BPL's previous MYAP was approved in October 2019 and outlined a 3-year plan that ended in 2021. Due to the pandemic, some items were rolled over into 2022 for completion. Upon completion of the current plan, the new updated plan focuses on moving towards a culture of inclusion and accountability.

Discussion

The proposed MYAP for BPL re-establishes our organizational commitment to providing and supporting equitable access to library resources, programs and services. It describes BPL's multi-leveled accessibility initiatives that aim to reach the following goals:

- Ensuring compliance with AODA, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and the IASR.
- Developing, reviewing, and implementing organizational-wide policies, standards, processes, plans, and training that will proactively seek to increase accessibility.
- Identifying, removing, and preventing systemic, social, communicational, and physical barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities.

As a stand-alone document, the MYAP aligns with the strategic plan and is guided by BPL's values. The priorities, action items and outcomes are organized according to the current applicable AODA standards: Information and Communications, Customer Service, Employment, and Built Environment & Public

Spaces. The document is intentionally designed to be an accessible document that is easily read by text-to-voice software.

The Library's Accessibility Advisory Committee, chaired by the Accessibility Coordinator and made up of library staff from various departments/responsibilities, will continue to review, advise, and guide the MYAP process, in consultation with community stakeholders and BPL's Management Team. The approved MYAP will be posted on the library website, with compliance reports to be filed in 2023 and 2025.

Financial Considerations

While much of the work covered by the MYAP is allotted within the Library's annual budget, some funding is received through grants.

Strategic Implications

BPL's MYAP clearly seeks to "inspire discovery with diverse collections, services, and spaces" by "using an equity lens to create a strategic roadmap for our physical spaces" and outlining a plan to provide access to "diverse and inclusive collections and services".

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Considerations

BPL's Accessibility Coordinator is the Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This intentional alignment is reflected in the MYAP as a document that not only strives to meet AODA standards but supports BPL's commitment to removing barriers in all our areas of service, programs, digital and physical spaces, and employment practices.

Risk Management

As outlined in the IASR, O. Reg. 191/11 s. 83 (1), failure to comply with the AODA or IASR may result an administrative monetary penalty being ordered to the maximum of \$100,000, in the case of a corporation, and \$50,000, in the case of an individual.

Policy

The MYAP is closely connected with the Accessibility Policy that is due to be reviewed by the Library Board in November 2022.

Report Author(s)

Respectfully submitted by:

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Burlington Public Library logo

Burlington Public Library: Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2022-25

Statement of Commitment

The Burlington Public Library (BPL) is committed to providing and supporting equitable access to library resources, programs, and services to all community members with disabilities. Our commitment will guide and further advance BPL's efforts in meeting its mission of enhancing community well-being by providing access to diverse collections of materials, services, and programs; develop and support work and service spaces that are welcoming and inclusive to meet the needs of persons with disabilities based on our organizational values¹ and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

Statement of Policy

BPL will comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)², Accessibility Standards for Customer Service³, and Integrated Accessibility Standards, Ontario Regulation (IASR)⁴, to identify the way services will be provided in an accessible manner for people with disabilities.

In simple terms, accessibility means providing all people the opportunity to participate fully, regardless of their ability. Based on that core idea, BPL will make every reasonable effort to ensure that services, programs, resources, and spaces are accessible.

¹ <https://www.bpl.on.ca/about/bpl/values>

² Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c.11

³ O. Reg. 429/7: Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

⁴ O.Reg.191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards

Accessibility Initiatives

BPL has developed a multi-level organizational-wide accessibility initiative. These initiatives include the following elements:

- An Accessibility Policy, overseen and approved by the Library Board.
- An Accessibility Advisory Committee, integrated by staff members from different departments/responsibilities with an advisory and guiding role to BPL's MYAP and accessibility efforts.
- An Accessibility Coordinator, with a coordination role and member of the City of Burlington's Accessibility Advisory Committee.
- A Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP), as a road map to enhance the accessibility of our services, programs, spaces, and employment practices.
- And a BPL's Accessibility Standards and Guidelines⁵, with the purpose to equip staff with resources and help make BPL a barrier-free environment.

In summary, these initiatives will aim to reach the following general goals:

- Ensuring compliance with AODA, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, and the IASR.
- Developing, reviewing, and implementing organizational-wide policies, standards, processes, plans, and training that will proactively seek to increase accessibility.
- Identifying, removing, and preventing systemic, social, communicational, and physical barriers to inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

BPL is committed to moving to a culture that is inclusive and accountable in all our areas of service, programs, digital and physical spaces, and employment practices. Our Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is the initiative that outlines current and future projects. This plan is our institutional pathway of removing barriers for the full participation of our

⁵ BPL's Accessibility Standards and Guidelines document will be completed by Q1 2023.

customers and employees seeking excellence in accessibility and inclusion to achieve and exceed the requirements of the AODA.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Guiding Principles and Values

AODA's four core principles are dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity. In addition to these principles, the following are extended BPL's values supporting our MYAP's approach:

Accountability: We cultivate a culture of trust, responsibility, and authenticity. We believe that every individual plays a role in ensuring accessibility in our organization, our services, and our programs.

Collaboration: We are better through collective effort. We recognize that we all contribute to the ongoing development of an accessible and inclusive environment.

Inclusion: We welcome everyone and encourage respectful sharing. We recognize that the perspectives of persons with disabilities are beneficial to creating a more welcoming environment.

Innovation: We embrace creativity and experimentation and with creativity and innovation, we alter perceptions and structures by creating strategies for communal and organizational change.

Intellectual Freedom: We uphold the open exchange of information and ideas. We understand the importance of different narratives that will increase our understanding of how persons with disabilities access our services.

Learning: We foster the lifelong pursuit of skills and knowledge so everyone can fulfill their potential. We are aware that learning comes in different ways, and we are ready to find different approaches to fulfill everyone's potential.

Love of Reading: We nurture the joy of reading, reading by touch, and listening in people of all ages and abilities. We acknowledge that there are various reading needs and

preferences. We will nurture access to our collection whether our customers are using their fingers, eyes, or ears.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Information and Communications Standards

Ontario's Information and Communications Standard encourages organizations to create and provide information and communications that people with disabilities can access. BPL will continue to create and provide information and communications for our customers and employees with disabilities in a way that takes into consideration their specific needs. In this new MYAP, we will extend the reach of previous plans by focusing on these specific areas: accessibility guidelines to support internal and external communications, provision of accessible formats and communication support, and advance in accessibility in our website/web content.

Priorities:

- Audit and update website content for accessibility.
- Establish accessibility guidelines to support interactions with our customers and employees.
- Create and use accessible-friendly templates for newly created documents such as policies, collaboration agreements, meeting documentation, PPT presentations and library board package.
- Establish an organizational-wide system for monitoring compliance.
- Audit website user experience, structure, and content based on accessibility principles including fine-tuning ReachDeck, accessibility web page, documents available on the website, and disclaimer about third party websites embedded in our system.

Actions

- Accessible website: Update all headings to appropriate case settings. Update contrast where necessary and add Alt text to images where necessary (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2022).
- Accessibility guidelines: Review/support other departments' accessibility plans if communication tools are included (to be fully implemented by end of Q1 2023).
- Accessible formats and communication support: Accessible-friendly templates where appropriate for newly created documents, such as

meeting agendas, meeting minutes, meeting reports, policies, board package, collaboration agreements, and signage (to be fully implemented by end of Q1 2023).

- Accessibility guidelines: Create procedural standards for main digital and print communication touchpoints, such as closed captioning standards on videos, social media image content, and poster design process (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Accessibility guidelines: Solidify web accessibility standards using SiteImprove as our compliance tool (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Accessible formats and communication support: Establish BPL initiative with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as lead to get user/focus group input that includes persons with disabilities (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2024).
- Accessible formats and communication support: Provide key documents for review, and support review process (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2024).
- Accessible formats and communication support: Facilitate user testing of web, social media, other marketing platforms (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2024).

Outcomes

- Frontline staff is equipped with the necessary information and tools to provide accessible formats and communication supports to customers with disabilities upon request.
- Website and web content are aligned with the four main principles for web accessibility: Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust.
- Website and web content are accessible, inclusive, and compatible with assistive technologies.
- Increased engagement, improved communication, and greater participation of customers and employees with disabilities in BPL's programs, events, and meetings.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Customer Service Standards

Ontario's Customer Service Standard mandates that a service provider must find ways to break down barriers that prevent customers with disabilities from accessing the services they need. BPL will continue to offer equitable access to library resources, programs, and services for the enjoyment of everyone in the community. In this new

MYAP, we will extend the reach of previous plans by focusing on these specific areas: customer service standards, accessibility guidelines related to programs/events, competency/training, and collections.

Priorities:

- Enhance our customer experience standards by incorporating accessible principles and use of inclusive language.
- Eliminate barriers and integrate accessibility best practices into all BPL's programs and events.
- Support and train staff to be knowledgeable accessibility champions.
- Review BPL's collection based on accessibility standards and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lenses.

Actions

- Customer service: Establish system signage to communicate that service animals and support persons are welcome in the library and to provide clear information about accessibility devices available per location (assistive devices, chairs, rollators, etc.) (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2022).
- Customer service: Offer regular public tours highlighting accessible services and equipment (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2023).
- Customer service: Review current customer experience standards, update standards of accessibility and modify any policy or procedures accordingly (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Accessibility guidelines: Develop orientation to the library's website using the accessibility tool ReachDeck (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2023).
- Accessibility guidelines: Engage with leaders within the disability community, partners, and members of our community, to gain insight about accessibility and best practices to be integrated in our services, programs, and events (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Accessibility guidelines: Audit our programs/events (online and in person) and ensure that they are structured to allow for the participation of persons with disabilities based on Universal Design standards⁶ (accommodation requirements, pre-planning, choosing a room,

⁶ To be included in BPL's Accessibility Standards and Guidelines document.

interpretation/assistive services or captioning technology, prep-location, sound, and presenter/facilitator best practices) (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2024).

- Competency: Train staff on how to communicate with people with disabilities using inclusive language and cultural sensitivity, how to recognize when someone is having difficulties with our systems/processes, and how to provide appropriate assistance (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Competency: Train program developers on library programming with accessible/universal design approaches and best practices (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Collections: Audit and review accessible collections (CELA, large print, cognitive care kits, sensory kits, BIPOC authors, languages, topics, etc.) and develop strategies to bring awareness, increase use, remain current with emerging formats (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Collections: Develop materials and provide orientation to accessible collections and kits as part of community outreach (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2024).

Outcomes

- Frontline staff is equipped with the tools and knowledge to provide library service and support for customers with disabilities.
- Equitable and inclusive access to our services by removing barriers to our library resources and foster key community partnerships to build a more accessible community.
- Increased engagement, improved communication, and greater participation of customers with disabilities in BPL's programs, events, and Interactions.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Employment Standards

Ontario's Employment Standard requires that employers must make their workplace and employment practices accessible to potential or current employees with disabilities. BPL will continue to promote an accessible, safe, and inclusive work environment for its employees with disabilities. In this new MYAP, we will extend the reach of previous plans by focusing on these specific areas: recruitment and hiring, accommodations and accessible documents, safety and emergency response plans, and training.

Priorities:

- Review and establish accessible recruitment and interviewing guidelines, including creating and implementing procedure to provide any requested assistive technology or equipment in the hiring process based on candidate needs.
- Review procedure for accessibility accommodation plans in the workplace. Provide information on workplace accommodation policies and processes.
- Update relevant Human Resources documentation to accessible formats or provide accessible formats upon request.
- Develop guidelines for supervisors on the process for individualized workplace emergency response plans for their staff with visible and non-visible disabilities.
- Maintain and coordinate training resources for staff and supervisors on accessibility (duty to accommodate, AODA refresher training, etc.) and EDI approaches (inclusive language and cultural sensitivity).

Actions

- Recruitment: Job postings and recruitment correspondence include a statement for candidates to reach out to Human Resources if they require an accommodation for recruitment, interview and, when required, pre-employment testing processes (completed in 2022).
- Recruitment: All job offers include a statement regarding accessibility. If an accommodation is required, BPL will work with the employee to meet their needs in accordance with our policy (completed in 2022).
- Recruitment: As a part of a broader commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA), demographic data is asked at the application stage to ensure that our candidate pool reflects the community (completed in 2022).
- Accommodation: Review and update the accommodation process, including developing and documenting Individual Accommodation Plans (IAP). Create a secure communication channel, application forms and FAQ documents to accompany accommodation requests (completed in 2022).
- Accommodation: Review and update BPL's return to work process when a disability related absence is not covered under the WSIB process (completed in 2022).

- Training: All BPL employees are required to complete AODA training as part of their orientation with completion records maintained by Human Resources (ongoing/completed in 2022).
- Accommodation: Provide information on BPL's workplace accommodation policies and process during orientation, including a Accommodation Toolkit to be used by staff and management (to be fully implemented by end of Q1 2023).
- Safety: Review current staff needs around individualized emergency response plans. Develop and establish a process for staff to submit requests for an individualized emergency response plan. Develop guidelines for managers/supervisors (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2023).
- Accessible documents: Create accessible templates for job postings and relevant Human Resources documentation in collaboration with the Marketing & Communications department, including a notice on all communication that accessible formats are available upon request (to be fully implemented by end of Q3 2023).
- Training: Establish a process for refresher training for existing training requirements and incorporate additional training with an accessibility and EDI approach lens in collaboration with Accessibility Coordinator (to be fully implemented by end of Q3 2023).

Outcomes

- Accessible HR system based on practices, processes, and policies that support the successful performance and advancement of employees with disabilities at all organizational level.
- Ensure awareness of legal obligations and understanding of the duty to accommodate and proactive implementation of emergency plans that support the full participation of employees with disabilities.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Built Environment and Public Spaces Standards

Ontario's Design of Public Spaces Standard outlines the need for newly constructed or redeveloped public spaces to be accessible for people with disabilities. Specific guidelines and measurements for the layout of public areas are outlined in the

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), and in the City of Burlington Design Standards⁷. In this new MYAP, we will focus on these priorities:

Priorities:

- Facility Accessibility audit in all our branches.
- Create procedures for the ongoing maintenance of accessibility elements in all our branches.
- Complete projects from previous MYAP.
- Reach a Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification – Accessibility Certified Standard for all BPL’s branches by 2025 and Accessibility Certified Gold standard by 2028.

Actions

- Appropriate placement and maintenance of trash cans to avoid blocking accessible operator buttons in branches (ongoing)
- Accessible furniture at all BPL branches and assistive devices (up/down desks, appropriate chairs for taller people, rollators, etc.) (ongoing)
- Relocate charging station (currently too high) at Alton branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q3 2022).
- Installation of Accessible Door Operators (17) at Aldershot, Brant Hills, and Central branches (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2022).
- Install Graded Path through Reading Garden and Accessible Door Operator to improve egress on 2nd floor at Central branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2022).
- Add accessible operator to staff entrance at New Appleby branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2022).
- Install Chair Lift in NW emergency exit to service 2nd & 3rd floor at Central branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q1 2023).
- Facilities Accessibility Audit using RHFAC rating at all BPL branches (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2023).
- Improve height and opening for external book drops and look for possibilities in conjunction with removal of hydraulic book drops at all BPL branches (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).

⁷ City of Burlington Design Standards

- Establish procedures for the ongoing maintenance of the accessibility elements of the library's branches and public spaces (to be fully implemented by end of Q2 2023).
- Wayfinding & Signage update at Central branch. It will replicate at other branches as appropriate (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023).
- Baffles in Centennial Hall to improve sound/echo at Central branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2023 depending on funding).
- Washroom and Service Counter Upgrades at Brant Hills branch (to be fully implemented by end of Q4 2025).
- Explore Accessible Parking options adjacent to BPL entrance at Aldershot branch (pending discussion with building owner).

Outcomes

- Incorporate accessibility best practices and technical requirement established under the AODA Design of Public Spaces Standards into newly constructed or renovated/redeveloped projects at Bateman project.
- Greater accessibility within BPL's branches, public and working spaces for our customers and employees with disabilities by incorporating the requirements established under the City of Burlington Design and AODA Standards.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan: Next steps

Under the AODA, the Burlington Public Library must file a compliance report every two years. During this Multi-Year Accessible Plan reports will be filled in 2023 and 2025. In addition, annual reports will be included as part of the Accessibility Advisory Committee report.